

CITY-PAIR PROGRAM

Regulations applicable to the Contract City Pair Program are found in DoD 4500.9-R, Part I, Chapter 103, pars. A2 and E. Following is an edited extract from that regulation.

A. Policy

GSA airlift contracted through the Contract City Pair Program shall be used for Government employees.

EXCEPTION TO THE USE OF CONTRACT CARRIERS: One or more of the following travel conditions must apply if a non-contract carrier, or a contract carrier other than the primary contractor, is used for travel within a contract route. The exception must be certified on the travel order or other document provided by the traveler or agency-approved authorizing official. Those conditions are as follows:

Effective 9 June 2000

1. Space or scheduled flights are not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel (to include space for pets when associated with permanent duty travel, e.g., PCS - USCINCTRANS SCOTT AFB IL//TCJ4-LT// 091304Z JUN 00), or use of contract service would require the traveler to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip;
2. The contract carrier's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of individual federal departments and agencies to schedule travel during normal working hours (see JTR, par. C1058);
3. A non-contract (DoD approved) carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which results in a lower total trip cost to the Government, to include the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses. NOTE: **This exception does not apply if the contract carrier offers a comparable fare and has seats available at that fare**, or if the lower fare offered by a non-contract carrier is limited to Government and military travelers on official business and only may be purchased with a Government procurement document (e.g., a GTR), contractor issued charge cards, or centrally billed account;
4. Rail service is available and that service is cost effective and consistent with mission requirements;
5. Smoking is permitted on the contract carrier flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the traveler;
6. **A through fare, special fare, commutation fare, excursion fare or reduced-rate roundtrip fare is available and;**
 - a. the agency determines prior to the employee's travel that this type of service is practical and economical to the Government; and
 - b. in case of a fare that is restricted or has specific eligibility requirements, it is known or can reasonably be anticipated, based on the travel as planned, that the ticket will be used.

B. Scheduled Air Carriers

1. Contract air service between city pairs shall be used for all domestic travel, and for international travel when AMC Category B/Patriot Express is not available or does not meet the mission requirement. If a contract city-pair fare is not available, the least expensive unrestricted fare (including a lower fare offered by a non-contract carrier limited to Government and military travelers on official business, e.g., YDG,

MDG, ODG, VDG, and similar fares) should be used. However, the authorizing/order-issuing official retains the authority to authorize a lesser fare and the traveler retains the ability to seek a lesser fare.

2. Cost reimbursable contractor personnel are prohibited from using Government discount fares (including Contract City Pairs fares) when purchasing commercial airline tickets.

"NOTE: See JTR, par. C2001-A2c for policy regarding use of Rail or Bus service."

C. Frequently Asked Questions About Using Contract City Pair Program

1. How does the program work?

First, GSA concentrates the Government's market share to make the most of the competition available. The Government traveler's responsibility is to use the contract carrier. The Government's delivery of market share drives the program. So, to ensure the fares stay favorable, we encourage Federal travelers to stick to the contract carrier.

Second, GSA works with other Government agencies to make sure that the Federal traveler's needs and concerns are fully met. This ensures that you have a good choice of convenient and timely flights.

Third, GSA works in partnership with the airline industry and respects their concerns. For example, because the fares are so attractive, the airlines insist that only Federal employees traveling on official business be allowed to use them. With a few limited exceptions, no one else can use the Government rates. GSA understands and accepts this in order to bring you, the Federal Traveler, the Best Value in the Sky.

2. What are the advantages of the program?

- No advance purchases required.
- No minimum or maximum length of stay required.
- Fully refundable tickets and no charge for cancellations or changes
- Seating not capacity controlled, (As long as there is a coach class seat on the plane, the traveler may purchase it)
- No blackout dates.
- Locked-in fares facilitate travel budgeting, and 70% average savings over regular walk-up fares.
- Fares are priced on one-way routes permitting agencies to plan multiple destinations.

3. Who can use it?

The City Pair Program is so attractive that usage is strictly limited. There are a few exceptions, but in general, only Federal or military employees on official travel, may use the program with an appropriate form of payment (Government travel charge card or centrally-billed account or GTR).

4. How come contractors cannot use it? It would save the government a lot of money!

GSA recognizes that contractors often sit next to Federal employees, work on the same projects as Federal employees, and travel with Federal employees. However, contractors are not Federal employees. All of the major airlines have made it clear to GSA that because the contract rates are so low and the terms so favorable, the airlines would drop out of the city pair program rather than extend the contract rates to contractors. GSA has made the business decision not to jeopardize the program nor the \$2 billion savings it generates for taxpayers. GSA cautions agencies that the purchase of contract fare tickets on behalf of cost reimbursable contractors is a misuse of the city pair program and could jeopardize its future success.

5. Do I have to use the contract carrier? Won't any airline do?

Federal and military travelers on official business are required to use the contract carrier unless a specific exception applies. This required use is the incentive necessary to obtain airline participation in the city pair program and allows the airlines the business volume necessary to offer discounted rates. Choosing not to use the contract carrier because of personal preference, frequent flyer clubs, etc., is a violation of the contract. The only exceptions to use of the contract carrier are:

Effective 9 June 00

- a. No seats/flights available in time to accomplish the purpose of the travel. (For example, the contract flight is fully booked.) (see subpar. A, item 1 regarding space for pets).
- b. A lower priced commercial fare is available. GSA advises traveler's to read the restrictions on such fares carefully. Often the non-contract fares prohibit or charge for changes or cancellations, require advance purchases, Saturday stays etc. If you can live with the terms of the fare, you can use it. (Most agencies find that non-contract fares are not beneficial to their program because of all the restrictions that apply). If you see an attractive rate, check the contract carrier first, to see if they have a similar fare.
- c. All of the flights are outside your core work hours and your agency has a written policy prohibiting travel outside core work hours (This very seldom occurs). Cost effective rail service is available and is consistent with mission requirements.
- d. Amtrak offers discount rates to Federal travelers. GSA encourages use of Amtrak when appropriate.
- e. Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the traveler.

6. If I have been authorized to use a business class fare, do I have to use the contract carrier?

Yes, if there is a business class fare awarded for the applicable city pair route unless one of the exceptions in paragraph 5, above applies. Not all city pairs have business class fares awarded. For the most part, business class fares are only available in some of the international markets.

7. What makes it the best value? Isn't it just low bid?

Absolutely not. Awards are made after measuring both quality of service and price. This allows an award to be made to a higher priced carrier if that carrier has superior service.

8. How is Quality of Service Evaluated?

A minimum service standard is set for each city pair. This minimum applies to the number of flights per day in each direction (the range is between 2 and 8), a maximum of one connection, a maximum ground time (90 minutes domestic, 180 minutes international) and limits on circuitry (how far out of the way the

carrier can take you.) To determine best value, a technical evaluation is conducted to evaluate the quality of each offeror's service based on the following considerations:

a. Time and Type of Service: This factor looks for flights offered throughout the day. Nonstop service, at convenient times, scores best under this factor.

b. Flight Time: This factor looks for the shortest total flight times, based on each carrier's routing. Nonstop service scores best under this factor.

c. Number and Type of Flights: This factor considers the number of flights offered throughout the day, in order to provide the traveler with several choices. Carriers with lots of nonstop flights score best under this factor.

d. Jet Service: This factor gives preference to jets over propeller aircraft. All these factors are weighed against price and a best value decision is made.

9. Why isn't every award for nonstop service?

Even though nonstop service is heavily favored, it is not always available or the best value. Some of the reasons that connect service is awarded are as follows:

- There is no nonstop carrier for a specific route.
- The nonstop carrier did not offer on the city pair. Some carriers have so much traffic on certain routes that they do not want the Government business for the route.
- The nonstop carrier did not meet the minimum requirements as outlined in the RFP. For example, the nonstop flights might be too late at night to be beneficial for our Federal traveler.
- The non-stop carrier has offered an unreasonably high price.
- The connect service carrier has offered a fare so low that it was the best overall value, even considering all the advantages of nonstop service.

10. Can't GSA make a carrier add nonstop service?

No. Even though the City Pair Program is huge, with sales well over \$1 billion per year, it still represents only about 2% of the airlines business. Unless the commercial traffic warrants it, a carrier will not add a new route or improved service levels for the Government.

11. Can you require the airlines to offer smoke free international flights?

GSA is buying a commercial service under the same terms and conditions as other buyers. Thus, GSA does not have the authority to require the airlines to offer smoke free flights. However, the Department of Transportation is working closely with the airline industry to encourage them to offer smoke free flights. There is an exception in the contract to the use of the contract carrier when smoking is permitted on the contract flight (see paragraph 5, above, last exception listed).

12. Can I use a contract fare for personal travel? What if the personal travel is being taken in conjunction with official government travel?

No. Use of contract fares is limited to official travel only. If personal travel is being taken in conjunction with official government travel, the contract fares cannot be used for that portion of the trip that is personal.

(NOTE: Government funded travel to and from a leave location when ordered TDY while on leave is considered official travel and therefore contract fares may be used to and from this leave location (see par. C4440)).

Example:

Travel authorization states the official travel itinerary as:

From: Atlanta, GA
To: San Francisco, CA and
Return to Atlanta, GA

City pair one-way contract fare from Atlanta, GA, to San Francisco, CA, is \$251 with United Airlines. Round trip totals \$502.

For personal reasons, employee wants to go to Chicago for several days resulting in the following:

From: Atlanta, GA
To: Chicago, IL
From: Chicago, IL
To: San Francisco, CA and
Return to Atlanta, GA

Since the itinerary portion from Atlanta to Chicago and Chicago to San Francisco is for personal reasons, the traveler is not authorized to use the city pair contract fares for this trip portion. Commercial fares are applicable to this trip portion. The city pair contract fare is applicable only to the trip portion from San Francisco, CA to Atlanta, GA, with United Airlines at \$251.

NOTE: The traveler is responsible for any additional costs when for personal convenience travel is performed by an indirect route or interrupts travel by a direct route. Reimbursement in this case is limited to the transportation cost by a direct route on an uninterrupted basis.

13. Can I combine two contract fares to save money?

If there is a contract fare for the route, the answer is no. If there is no contract fare for the route, the answer is yes.

14. How do I know whether or not there is a contract fare?

Contract fares are identifiable because they normally carry the fare designator YCA. You can ask your Travel Management Center (TMC) or (Contracted) Commercial Travel Office (CTO) or check on the following city pair website: <http://pub.fss.gsa.gov/citypairs/>.

15. Why does the Government have to pay the Airline Passenger Excise tax? Isn't it exempt from taxes?

The Federal Government is often exempted from state and local taxes. However, the airline passenger excise tax is a federal tax and the Federal Government is subject to it.

For more information on GSA's Airline City Pairs Program, call or e-mail

Mr. Eddie Murphy
Contract Specialist
703/305-3376
eddie.murphy@gsa.gov

Ms. Andrea Dingle
Contracting Officer
703/305-6190
andrea.dingle@gsa.gov

Mr. Thomas Uberto
Contracting Officer
703/305-7822
thomas.uberto@gsa.gov